

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 MANAGU 04883 190008Z

62

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 ACDA-07 TRSE-00 AID-05 IGA-02

OMB-01 MC-02 EB-07 COME-00 CIAE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00

SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 /085 W

----- 116549

O 182314Z OCT 76

FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1402

INFO SECDEF WASHDC (ISA/DSAA) IMMEDIATE

DIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

JCS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS CZ

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 4883

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, PFOR, NU

SUBJECT: NICARAGUAN ARMS BUILDUP

1. SUMMARY: IN APPARENT IMPORTANT POLICY SHIFT, PRESIDENT SMOMOZA IS NOW CONCERNED WITH IMPROVEMENT OF NICARAGUAN AIR FORCE COMBAT CAPABILITY IN VIEW OF GREATLY INCREASED SALVADORAN AND PARTICULARLY HONDURAN JET CAPABILITY RESULTING FROM RECENT AIRCRAFT PURCHASES BY BOTH COUNTRIES. HE IS SEEKING AIRCRAFT FROM ISRAEL AND PROBABLY OTHER COUNTRIES BECAUSE OF GROWING SENSE OF VULNERABILITY AND UNCERTAINTIES ABOUT U.S. REACTION TO A REQUEST FOR JET AIRCRAFT AFTER DELAY IN M-16 RIFLE PURCHASE, AND WITHDRAWAL OF MILGP AND CONGRESSIONAL CUT-OFF OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO URUGUAY. PRESIDENT WOULD BE DEFINITELY PREFER U.S. A-37 AIRCRAFT BUT DID NOT FEEL THAT U.S. WOULD BE RESPONSIVE. END SUMMARY

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 MANAGU 04883 190008Z

2. AMERICAN BUSINESSMAN WHO DEALS WITH NICARAGUAN AIR FORCE REPORTED TO DATT THAT SEVERAL HIGH RANKING NICARAGUAN AIR FORCE OFFICERS ARE CONVINCED THAT PRESIDENT SOMOZA IS ATTEMPTING TO PURCHASE MYSTERES AND MIRAGE AIRCRAFT FROM ISRAEL. THE NUMBER MENTIONED WAS TEN OF EACH TYPE ARMED WITH 30 MM. CANNON (REF IR687-00052 76). ESTIMATED COST IS ABOUT \$80. MILLION. DATT CONFIRMED IN CONVERSATION WITH NICARAGUAN AIR FORCE OFFICERS THAT RUMORS CONCERNING ARMS PURCHASES ARE BEING CIRCULATED AND ARE BELIEVED BY THESE OFFICERS. DUE TO COST INVOLVED IT IS PROBABLE THAT NUMBERS MENTIONED ARE EXCESSIVE. HOWEVER, THERE IS DEFINITE INTEREST AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL IN PROVIDING FOR A DEFENSIVE CAPABILITY AGAINST THE GREATLY IMPROVED HONDURAN AIR FORCE.

3. ON 14 OCTOBER COMUSMILGP INFORMED PRESIDENT SOMOZA HE HAD HEARD RUMORS OF A POSSIBLE GON PURCHASE OF MYSTERES AND ASKED IF IT WAS TRUE. THE PRESIDENT ANSWERED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. IN RESPONSE TO QUERIES OF COMUSMILGP, THE PRESIDENT STATED HE WOULD RATHER HAVE SIX (6) U.S. A-37'S BUT DID NOT BELIEVE U.S. WOULD SELL THEM TO HIM BASED ON ALL THE DELAYS AND PROBLEMS OVER THE M-16 RIFLES. COMUSMILGP INQUIRED WHETHER THE PRESIDENT WAS INTERESTED IN PRICE AND AVAILABILITY (P&A) OF SIX (6) A-37'S. THE PRESIDENT SAID THAT HE WAS AND AGREED TO WAIT UNTIL RESULTS OF P&A REQUEST WERE RECEIVED BEFORE TAKING FURTHER ACTION ON THE MATTER. COMUSMILGP NOW ASSEMBLING DATA FOR SUBMISSION OF P&A REQUEST FOR SIX (6) A-37 AIRCRAFT.

4. IN RECENT MONTHS, PRESIDENT SOMOZA HAS EXPRESSED GROWING CONCERN ABOUT ARMS BUILDUP BY EL SALVADOR AND HONDURAS (ESPECIALLY THE LATTER COUNTRY) TO THE AMBASSADOR AND OTHERS ON MORE THAN ONE OCCASION. HE FEARS THAT AN OUTBREAK OF HOSTILITIES MIGHT SPILL OVER INTO NICARAGUA OR THE HONDURAN MILITARY COULD BECOME RADICALIZED WITH UNFORESEEN CONSEQUENCES FOR HIS COUNTRY. NICARAGUA'S SENS OF VULNERABILITY HAS BECOME STRONGER AS BORDER CONFLICT SHOWS NO SIGNS OF BEING RESOLVED SOON AND ARMS PURCHASES BY HONDURAS AND EL SALVADOR CONTINUE. SOMOZA IS ALSO DISTURBED BY WHAT HE PERCEIVES TO BE DECLINING U.S. RESPONSIVENESS IN MEETING NICARAGUA'S LEGITIMATE SELF-DEFENSE REQUIREMENTS. DELAYS IN THE APPROVAL OF M-16'S AND OTHER ARMS SALES RAISED DOUBTS ABOUT U.S. WILLINGNESS TO SELL ARMS TO NICARAGUA AND ENCOURAGES THE GON TO

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 MANAGU 04883 190008Z

SEEK ALTERNATIVE SUPPLIERS THAT ARE LESS INTERESTED THAN WE ARE IN AVOIDING REGIONAL ARMS COMPETITION.

5. IT IS IN OUR INTEREST TO RETAIN AN ABILITY TO EXERCISE A MODERATING INFLUENCE ON GON ARMS PURCHASES AND TO DAMPEN WHAT APPEARS TO BE A WIDENING OF REGIONAL ARMS RACE. THIS CAN ONLY BE DONE BY DISCOURAGING A TURN BY GON TO OTHER SUPPLIERS. THEREFORE, THE

DEPARTMENT IS RESPECTFULLY REQUESTED TO GIVE IMMEDIATE ATTENTION
TO P&A REQUEST WHEN IT IS RECEIVED.
THEBERGE

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FIGHTER AIRCRAFT, MILITARY PROCUREMENT
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 OCT 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: greeneet
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976MANAGU04883
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760391-0101
From: MANAGUA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761042/aaaabjsy.tel
Line Count: 118
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: greeneet
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <15 JUN 2004 by GarlanWA>; APPROVED <08 OCT 2004 by greeneet>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: NICARAGUAN ARMS BUILDUP
TAGS: MASS, PFOR, MPOL, NU
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006